

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 5969

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ENRG, EG, US
SUBJECT: MOBIL BEGINS EXPLORATION WORK IN SINAI

REF: (A) CAIRO 4886, (B) CAIRO A-44

1. DURING VISIT OF MOBIL EXECUTIVES IN LATE MARCH, MOBIL AND EGPC INITIALLED AGREEMENT FOR EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION IN AREA MENTIONED REFTTEL AND DESCRIBED REPAIR. AREA IS EXTENSION OF FORMER MOBIL DEVELOPMENT LEASES IN SUDR, MATARMA AND ASL. ALTHOUGH NO ONE YET SEEMS TO HAVE PLOTTED DISENGAGEMENT LINES WITH AREA INVOLVED, IT APPEARS THAT ABOUT ONE THIRD OF THE AREA LIES BETWEEN LIME M AND GULF OF SUEZ COAST. ACCORDING TO TERMS, MOBIL AGREED TO BEGIN EXPLORATION WORK BEFORE FORMAL PEOPLES ASSEMBLY APPROVAL WAS VOTED.

2. MOBIL EXPLORATION CHIEF SAWTELLE TOLD EMBOFF RECENTLY THAT SEISMIC CREWS BELONGING TO GEOPHYSICAL SERVICES, INC., (GSI), HAVE BEEN WORKING IN AREA AROUND SUDR, MATARMA AND ASL FOR ABOUT THREE WEEKS. GSI APPLIED TO UN THROUGH SINAI LIAISON OFFICE FOR PERMISSION TO ENTER AREA WITH REQUIRED NUMBER OF VEHICLES, EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING EXPLOSIVES, AND PERSONNEL TO CARRY OUT EIGHT-WEEK SEISMIC PROGRAM. ACCORDING TO SAWTELLE, UN SCRUTINIZED LISTS, INCLUDING PICTURES OF VEHICLES AND PASSPORTS OF INDIVIDUALS CAREFULLY, BEFORE PERMITTING EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL TO ENTER.
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ONE INTERESTING FACT IS THAT GSI HAD TO UNDERTAKE MAJOR MINE CLEARANCE OPERATION IN AREA JUST NORTH OF AL-SUDR, WHICH UN ASSURED GSI WAS FREE OF MINES. MOBIL KNOWS OF AT LEAST ONE INCIDENT IN WHICH GSI TEAMS STRAYED INTO ISRAELI HELD TERRITORY. WHEN UN DISCOVERED THIS THEY ASKED GSI TO RETURN WEST OF LINE M. ISRAELIS APPARENTLY DO NOT PATROL THIS AREA CAREFULLY AS NO ISRAELI TROOPS HAVE BEEN ENCOUNTERED.

3. BASED ON GSI'S EXPERIENCE WITH EXPLORATION WORK IN AREA SOUTH OF LINE E AND WEST OF LINE M, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT U.N. IS INTERPRETING SINAI II AGREEMENT, ANNEX PARA 3(B) TO MEAN THAT BOTH OIL FIELD OPERATION AND EXPLORATION ARE ACCEPTABLE CIVILIAN ACTIVITIES. THERE IS ALSO POSSIBILITY THAT MOBIL'S PREVIOUS ASSOCIATION WITH DEVELOPMENT LEASES AT SUDR, MATARMA AND ASL LED U.N. TO BELIEVE THAT CURRENT PROGRAM RELATED TO OPERATION OF EXISTING FIELDS. (FYI WE KNOW, FOR INSTANCE, THAT C.O.P.E., OPERATORS OF ABU RUDEIS/BELAYIM FIELDS, DID SOME SEISMIC WORK RELATED TO REHABILITATION OF ABU RUDEIS IN 1976 USING EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL ALREADY AT ABU RUDEIS. END FYI.)

4. BASED ON DISCUSSION WITH SAWTELLE, GOE NEVER MENTIONED POSSIBILITY OF ACCESS PROBLEM AND NO PROTECTIVE CLAUSE IS CONTAINED IN MOBIL'S AGREEMENT, EXCEPT FOR THAT AREA IN BUFFER ZONE OR IN TERRITORY STILL UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATION (EAST OF LINE M). MOBIL, OF COURSE, CONCERNED THAT NOTHING INTERFERE WITH THEIR EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLANS, HENCE ASKED US NOT TO RAISE SUBJECT WITH UN SINCE OFFICIAL APPROVAL ALREADY GRANTED AND CREWS AT WORK. WE IN FACT SEE NO REASON TO DO SO.
MATTHEWS

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